OECOPHORA BRACTELLA (L.) IN HAMPSHIRE, 1983

By P. H. STERLING*

I wish to report the successful rearing of many specimens of *Oecophora bractella* (L.) (Lep: Oecophoridae) from Harewood Forest, VC12. This is the first record for the county of Hampshire, and there are only four other vice-counties in Britain for which there are any published records, (see below).

For the past three years Dr. J. R. Langmaid and the Sterling family have spent many cold March or April afternoons searching for Oecophorid larvae associated with dead wood. In 1981 one *Esperia oliviella* (Fabr.) (see *Ent. Rec.* **94**, 98.) was reared from the the above forest, but most of the larvae found either died of dessication or mould. The one *E. oliviella* that was reared had been placed in a container in which strips of bark were laid on top of one another to a depth of three or four layers. The container was covered with netting and the top layer of bark sprayed daily. Many more Oecophorid larvae were found under the bark of dead oak in Harewood Forest this spring and were treated as above. Many individuals were reared, the two commonest species being *O. bractella* and *Esperia sulphurella* (Fabr.), with only a few *E. oliviella* present.

The larva of *O. bractella* is variable in colour, but is generally olive-grey-brown with a light brown head. The plate of the 2nd segment is always darker than the head, and the anal plate varies from light to dark brown. Distinguishing this larva from those of the other *Esperia* species in the field is difficult. All three species have long thin bodies, move quickly when disturbed, and live underneath loosely woven silk tubes spun amongst loose bark or between the bark and the trunk.

The occurrence of *O. bractella* in a particular wood seems to be determined not by the species composition of dead trees, but by the condition i.e. microclimate of those present. Drs. M. W. Harper and J. R. Langmaid, this year, reared *O. bractella* from the bark of Ash, Larch, Pine, Spruce and Western Hemlock in the Forest of Dean, Glos. It seems that larvae prefer to live under thin bark in which there is some moisture, but not so much that the wood has rotted beneath, and in trunks which have probably been dead for between two to five years. A search was made in Roydon Woods, Brockenhurst, VC11, and although there was plenty of dead oak, no Oecophorid larvae were found. The bark on these large trees was noticeably thicker and presumably the correct microhabitat was not created between the bark and the wood. As

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a rule of thumb, thin dead bark which can easily be prized away with a knife is ideal.

Finally, an interesting association discovered in Harewood Forest was that most dead trees bearing Oecophorid larvae were also attacked by the "Honey Fungus", *Armilleriella mellia,* which grows in lignified strands between the bark and wood. Although the fungus showed no definite signs of having been eaten by the larvae, the association may be important for the conservation of these Oecophorids. Honey Fungus is highly undersirable to foresters because it can infect and kill trees stressed for other reasons, (eg. bark beetle damage). Infected trees tend to be removed as soon as the fungus is detected to prevent its spread, with the consequent removal of at least one of the potential habitats for these Oecophorids. Col. D. H. Sterling has contacted the managing foresters, Tilhill of Farnham, Surrey concerning the conservation of *O. bractella* in Harewood Forest, and I am pleased to report that they have kindly co-operated and are interested in the species' preservation.

Some of the published records for the four vice-counties are as follows: VC34: *Entomologist,* **66**, 260 (1933); VC35 many records; VC56: J. W. Carr, *The Invertebrate Fauna of Nottinghamshire* (1916); VC66: *Ent. mon. Mag.* **17**, 237 (1881).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr. J. R. Langmaid, Col. D. H. Sterling and Mr. M. J. Sterling for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

DREPANEPTERYX PHALAENOIDES L. (NEUROPTERA: HEMEROBIIDAE) IN SURREY IN 1983. — A single specimen of this mainly northern species was taken by us whilst beating oak at Mitcham Common, Surrey on the 15th September 1983. The identification was confirmed by the BM(NH), to which three other examples of *D. phalaenoides* had been reported in 1983, and it was suggested that there is now a breeding colony in Southern England. — R. K. A. MORRIS, BSc., 241, Commonside East, Mitcham, Surrey and J. A. HOLLIER, BSc., F.R.E.S., 74 RobinsonRoad, London SW17. [Of this rare and striking neuropteron, Wild (*Ent. Rec.,* **91**:285) records taking two specimens at Selsdon, Surrey in 1979. — J.M.C.-H.]

PELOSIA MUSCERDA HUFN.: DOTTED FOOTMAN IN BROMLEY, W. KENT. — A male *Pelosia muscerda* came to my garden m.v. trap on the night of 20th July 1983; it was accompanied by *Autographa gamma* L. and *Nomophila noctuella* D. & S. I assume it was a migrant as there are no suitable localities nearby and another example was reported from Kent on the 16th July (cf. Collins, *Ent. Rec.,* **95**: 222). — DR. J. H. CLARKE, 16 Patterdale Close, Bromley, Kent BR1 4H2.